1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32

CHAPTER I

THE SETTING IN TIME; THE HISTORICAL ISOLATION OF BASTAR

[13] BASTAR STATE lies at the extreme south-east corner of the Central Provinces of India, between 17° 46′ and 20° 14′ north, and 80° 15′ and 82° 1′ east. Its area, according to the recently revised Survey of India figures, of 13,725 square miles makes it the tenth state in India in size, larger than Belgium and nearly as large as Holland. It is far larger than any of the old Central Provinces and Orissa States, with which it has recently been brought into the new Eastern States Agency. But it is one of the most sparsely peopled tracts of [161] India, the 1931 population of 524,721 giving a density of only 34 to the square mile. If any part of India is still *terra incognita* to nearly all British officials and travellers, it is the vast tract covered by Bastar and the huge Jeypore zamindari recently transferred from the Vizagapatam Agency of Madras to the new province of Orissa.

[18] To the ordinary Indian of neighbouring districts, even to many of the few immigrant Hindu and Mussalman traders, this remains a land of savages, seeking still for human victims to sacrifice to their fetishes, skilled in herbs and simples, and potent practitioners of magic and witchcraft. Their view is little changed from that held 110 years ago by Maratha officials who described the Marias of the Abujhmar mountains to Sir Richard Jenkins, then Resident at the Court of Nagpur, as 'naked savages, living on roots and sprigs, and hunting for strangers to sacrifice'.

[175] Bastar has in fact always been an almost unknown backwater of the river of Indian history. The late Chief, Maharani Prafulla Kumari Devi, at her accession in 1924 was the last legitimate survivor of one of the most ancient royal families of southern India, the Kakatiya, which reigned at Warangal from about A.D. 1150 to 1425, first possibly as feudatories of the Chalukya kings and then independently. In Bastar folk-song, Annam Deo, the first to reign in Bastar, is spoken of as 'Chalkibans Raja', which may be a corruption of 'Chalukya-bans' and indicate that the Kakatiya family was a cadet branch of the Chalukya. Pratap Rudra, the greatest and the last independent Kakatiya king of Warangal, lost his life and independence in battle with the Mohammedan invaders of the Deccan under Ahmad Shah Bahmani early in the fifteenth century and, according to Bastar tradition and folk-song, his brother Annam Deo fled across the Godavari into Bastar, which had

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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133 slopes and in the Mangnar and Dantewara Mar villages there are often fine patches of sal and other evergreen trees. On the hill-tops and on slopes exhausted by shifting cultivation, high grass and stunted trees make the country monotonous to the eye and tiring through lack of shade. Where the slopes are newly cleared and have once been burnt for shifting *penda* cultivation, often a small grove of trees is left on the summit, like nothing so much as the top-knot of hair on the crown of a Maria's otherwise roughly-shaved head. But the moment you descend off the rocky plateaux you meet green glades and hurrying streams, or may feel the sudden amaze of a prospect such as that of the blue apex of the lofty Bailadila ridge seen beyond the haze of the Indrawati valley down the valley of a stream that far below the ridge between Itulnar and Hikul races due south to the Indrawati.

161 361 There are only between 150 and 160 villages inhabited in all this area of about 1,500 square miles, and there are only 11,500 Hill Marias. This means one village in every ten square miles, and less than eight persons to the square mile. In few places can you lose yourself in such solitudes.

635 North Bastar thus consists administratively of the Antagarh, Kondagaon and Jagdalpur tahsils, half of the Jagdalpur tahsil being south of the Indrawati, and of the portions of the Kutru and Bhopalpatnam zamindaris and the Dantewara tahsil north of the Indrawati.

635 491 In South Bastar there are the Dantewara, Bijapur and Konta tahsils, and the Sukma, Kutru, Bhopalpatnam and Kotapalli-Pamer zamindaris; these four zamindaris alone survive out of the seventeen or eighteen of old times. A great western road runs 134 miles from Jagdalpur through Gidam, Karli, Matawara, Bijapur and Bhopalpatnam to Timer on the Indrawati, opposite Patagudam in Chanda district, whence there is a forest road to Sironcha; branches south from Gidam and Karli run to Dantewara, with a further extension to Kameli at the foot of the Bailadila hills; north from Gidam to Barsur, and from Matawara to Kutru; and south from Bhopalpatnam to Tarlagudam on the Godavari and thence over the Latpatkandi pass into the Nugur and Albaka taluqs of Madras. A great southern road runs 114 miles from Jagdalpur to Sukma and Konta. A network of forest roads of recent construction links these roads together between Tirathgarh in Jagdalpur tahsil, Katakalian, Kuakonda and Dantewara, or southward from Kuakonda to the Kolab-Sabari at Misma on the Konta road, and to Konta via the Aranpur pass, Jaggergonda and Golapalli; while Bijapur is linked to Cherla and Jaggergonda to Dummagudam, both on the Godavari. With these and other

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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under the generic name Gond. In 1931 the tribes enumerated as Gonds in the previous three censuses were separately enumerated under the names Bhattra, Gond, Maria, Muria, Koya and Parja. The totals for these must be added both for 1931 and 1891 in order to see how far the primitive races of Bastar have been increasing. The 1921 figure for Gonds was only 107,503 persons, compared with 285,519 in 1911, and was obviously wrong; the 113,100 persons enumerated in 1921 under Minor Castes should be added to the 107,503 Gonds, though even then the total of 220,603 is below the correct figure. Excluding the Halbas and certain minor aboriginal tribes, the comparative figures are then :—

Year	Gonds
1891	128,442
1901	204,841
1911	285,519
1921	220,603
1931	359,637

The increase in forty years has been 181 per cent. In the same period the total population rose by 69 per cent. from 310,884 to 524,721. The primitive population is more than holding its own.

Halbas were also classified at the census, not altogether rightly, as primitive, and with them and certain other minor primitive tribes added, the primitive population rises to 379,082. Even this does not tell the full tale. Large numbers of the persons returned as members of the Hindu functional castes, the graziers, potters, fishermen, weavers (Mahras), blacksmiths and others, are in reality members of primitive tribes speaking their languages and only differentiated from them by their occupation. There is nothing in outward appearance to distinguish these persons from other aboriginals; they follow their tribal religions whether enumerated as such or as Hindus. I consider that on this account the 1931 primitive total can safely be regarded as 400,000, or 76 per cent.; the census report puts the percentage at 73·6.

The totals given for the tribes formerly treated as Gonds but separately enumerated in 1931 are :—

Bhattra	36,611
Gond	24,407
Maria	146,070
Muria	124,993
Koya	9,988
Parja	17,568

Unfortunately even now, as will be shown later, the classification has been over-simplified, and is of little use for scientific purposes. The only categories about which no doubt can arise are Bhattra

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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and Parja, and it is therefore easy first of all to describe their distribution; only the briefest of general remarks will be made about them; I hope at a later date to publish a separate account, at least of the Parjas.

In the ethnographic map on page 40 the Bhattras are shown by the letter A and the Parjas by the letter B. The former alone among the races of Bastar have abandoned whatever Munda or Dravidian tongue they may have once spoken, and now use a corrupt Uriya dialect. In Bastar, except for one or two villages at the south-east corner of the Kondagaon tahsil, the Bhattras are confined to the north-east corner of Jagdalpur, along the Jeypore border, across which they overflow in large numbers into Jeypore and, beyond, Kalahandi State. Their Bastar number in 1891 was 21,477. The use of their language is spreading to other tribes, chiefly the Parjas; it was spoken by 45,830 persons in 1931, which means that 9,219 non-Bhattras speak it. The spread of its use among the Parjas is shown by the fact that only 12,363 Parji-speakers were returned out of 17,568 Parjas. Actually, as Sir George Grierson has admitted, Bhattri might as well be classified as one of the many forms of Halbi as a dialect of Uriya; to the outward ear they sound very similar, and the two languages are mutually intelligible. Halbi always varies according to its proximity to Chhattisgarhi, Telugu or Gondi; and to me Bhattri seems only Halbi influenced by its proximity to Uriya-speaking tracts. Nor are local census enumerators by any means to be relied upon effectively to distinguish Halbi and Bhattri. Grierson's remark of Gondi dialects that the names indicate tribal rather than linguistic differences is true of Halbi and Bhattri at all events.

Bhattras and Parjas

The Bhattras live in open country with miles of good rice cultivation. They are gradually giving up even their very modified form of *dahya* or shifting cultivation, consisting now mainly of the occasional cutting and carting to their rice fields of forest undergrowth, and burning it there as manure. All but twenty-six of them were returned in 1931 as following their tribal religion; and this is really the correct account, though they are considerably more Hinduized than any other tribe classed as primitive in 1931 except the Halbas. The latter, whose religion preserves only slightly less of the tribal element than the Bhattra, are, however, in contrast, all but thirty-six recorded as Hindu. No anthropometric work has been done among the Bastar Bhattras; and there are no data for accepting or rejecting on physical grounds the Central Provinces habit of classifying them as a branch of the Gond race. Traditionally they came with the first Raja of Bastar from Warangal, while over

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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Hill Maria
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101 Koitor, all meaning Lowland Koitor, and the plains below are either Dorbhum, Hatiyabhum or Kalpatti; Dor Koitor and Dorbhum, the terms most commonly used, are probably the source of the expression Dhur Koitor said to be used fairly generally in the Central Provinces to designate the ordinary Gond as distinct from the one who gives himself social airs as a Raj-Gond; a Gondi word has been assimilated to the Hindi '*dhur*' or '*dhul*' meaning 'dust', and the Gond commoner referred to as the 'Dust' Gond. Hatiya-bhum is simply the land of the *hat* or bazaar. *Kalpatti* is the ordinary Halbi term for lowlands, which we have already seen applied as the name of two *parganas* in Antagarh. Hatiya is similarly the name of a *pargana* in the north of Kondagaon.

●161 The Hill Maria tracts are shown by the letter E in the ethnographic map. An account of their country and distribution has been given already in Chapter II, pages 26-8. The estimate of 11,500 population is fairly accurate; I examined the actual census returns of all the Hill Maria villages except the five included in the outlying Mangnar *pargana* of Bhopalpatnam zamindari, and obtained a total of 11,361 (5,702 males and 5,659 females). There can only be 140 or 150 persons at the most in the Mangnar villages. Since the census, many Hill Marias have come back to the Abujhmar, chiefly from the Ahiri zamindari; it was found when the poll-tax settlement was effected in 1932 that 240 able-bodied males had so returned; probably, therefore, the Hill Maria population is now just over 12,000 in Bastar. There had in the past been a considerable exodus of Marias from the old Paralkot zamindari, owing to the zamindar's oppression. As they consider the new conditions in Bastar better than those in Ahiri, more may be expected to drift back into Bastar.

Hill Marias

The tract is extremely homogeneous. In 22 Hill Maria villages in Kutru with 1,443 Hill Marias the only non-Marias are 38 Rawats and 1 Halba; in 9 Hill Maria villages in Dantewara there are 879 Marias to 3 Telanga, 98 Rawats and 19 Mahras. The Rawats are only in the villages near the plains where they are employed by Marias to tend cattle and are beginning to teach them the use of the plough and the milking of cattle; they speak Maria as fluently as Halbi, and in outward appearance are scarcely distinguishable from Marias. Most of the Hill Maria villages are in Antagarh, and have hardly any outsiders except occasional Rawats or liquor contractors. The few blacksmiths are really Marias, knowing no 564 other language than Maria, having the same clans as the Marias and still occasionally marrying Maria girls; though, as among other tribes, there is always a tendency to look down on the blacksmith,

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

and to make him live by himself on the outskirts of the village, so that in the end he becomes almost a separate low caste. This, however, has not gone nearly as far among the Hill Marias as among the Bison-horn.

To the south, along the Indrawati valley, the Hill Marias are influenced strongly by the Bison-horn Marias, and the area concerned is marked on the map by the letter H. The influence of the Bison-horn Marias gets less as you go west down the valley towards Kutru, and beyond Kutru is replaced by that of the Telugu-influenced Koitor of the riverain tract, known generally in those parts as Dorlas. There is no doubt that the inhabitants of most of these villages near the river were once Hill Marias. They seem to have been enumerated as Murias in the 1931 census, and are included in the 15,000 persons whom I have indicated at the end of my account of the Murias as wrongly enumerated at census as Murias. Where the Hill Marias are the immediate neighbours of the Bison-horn Marias, the influence of the latter is strong. In theory, according to local legend the Mander, a tributary running more or less east to west and joining the Indrawati on its *southern* bank near Barsur, is the boundary between the two kinds of Marias, with the Indrawati as the boundary west of the confluence. Here the Hill Marias know the Bison-horn Marias as Dandami Koitor; but the name is not universal in Bastar, and I have therefore preferred to call them Bison-horn because the wearing of bison-horns by their male dancers is so obvious a peculiarity of the tribe. Formerly, the legend says, Pat Raja, the log-god of Mornar in the Mangnar *pargana* who is regarded almost as the overlord of all the log-gods of the Hill Marias, and his wife's brother Use Modia, the log-god of the Lekami clan at Ghotpal, a large Bison-horn village south of the Indrawati, between Barsur and G[illegible], divided up the Hill and Bison-horn Marias into *dadabhai* and *akomama* clans (brother-clans and wife-clans), and in those days the Hill Marias used to intermarry with the Bison-horn, and each used to attend the other's festivals. One day, as the Gumelor clan of Hill Marias, which occupies a group of villages in Bhairamgarh Mar, Dantewara Mar and Mangnar, was trooping to Ghotpal to dance at the Koqsar festival there, carrying their axes on their shoulders, a Gume with his axe accidentally severed the *sem* bean vine of the Old Widow (*Kuram Mutta'i*), who thereupon put a curse on all the Hill Marias and forbade them ever again to come south of the Mander river for social or religious purposes. Since then, according to the Hill Marias, intermarriage and participation in each other's festivals has ceased. On the other

Hill Marias of Indrawati valley, influenced by Bison-horn Marias or Dorla Koitor

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

as Muria at the census, while the actual Dorla Koitor appear to have been shown under Gond. 101

The census total of Marias was 146,070. I estimated at the end of my account of the Murias that 15,000 Marias and Koyas had been wrongly enumerated as Murias. This raises the total of Marias to 161,070, counting all the 15,000 whether Koyas or not as Marias, for reasons which will appear below. My adjusted census figure for the Hill Marias was 11,500. The mixed Hill-Bison-horn villages except Tumirgunda were excluded from this, and for demographic purposes may be regarded as Bison-horn. The valley villages occupied by Hill Maria stock and the villages of mixed Hill Maria and Dorla stock at the most have 3,500 inhabitants, though spread over a large area. Excluding them and the 11,500 pure Hill Marias from the 161,070, we get a balance of 146,070 as the strength of the Bison-horn Marias. To this I would add the 9,988 returned at census as Koyas, giving a total of 156,058 Bison-horn Marias. Of these, about 50,000 are in Jagdalpur, 60,000 in Dantewara, 7,000 in Konta, 3,000 in Kutru, 1,000 in Bhopalpatnam, 26,000 in Sukma, and 9,000 in Bijapur. 161

Bison-horn Marias, Koyas and Dorlas

The southern borders of this race are fairly clear when enquiry is made on the spot, but very difficult to ascertain from previous literature owing to the lack of precision of nomenclature. Much trouble has arisen from the word Koya. Glasfurd did not define Koyas or give their habitat in the report already quoted. In a report on the ethnography of the old Upper Godavari District including Bastar, printed in a collection of papers for a Central Provinces ethnographic exhibition in the sixties, he wrote :— 181

> 'Along the southern boundary we find the Telingas tolerably pure, but with a large mixture of intermediate castes, such as the Koys and Naikwars, which last the late Mr. Hislop classed among the Gonds. Proceeding inward we find the Telingas cease, and the Koys and Gottawars become the sole inhabitants. The former belong also to the Gond family; but from their vicinity to the Telingas they have acquired many of their words, and as the latter are the superior race, the Koys ape their manners a good deal. The Gottawars are inferior to the Koys in caste; but not so in appearance nor in physical conformation. Where they live close to Telingas, they also have acquired many of the Telugoo words; but they do not, as the Koys, ape Telinga manners.
>
> 'Proceeding still farther towards the interior, we find the Gottawars the prevailing class, and in the centre they appear merely to change their name; for the Maria is in no wise different from the Gottawar.'

In the classified list of races annexed to his report he gives as habitat for Koys the 'banks of the Godavery, Pranheeta and Savery rivers, and the Beejee, Potukul, Kotapilly, Veejapore, Soonkoom and Bhopalputnum Talooks of Bustar'; for Gottawars

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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Appendix I

Administrative Divisions of Bastar State

	Area[1] (*sq. miles*)	*Population* (1931 *Census*)
Tahsils:		
Jagdalpur	1,996	198,640
Kondagaon	1,880	83,992
Antagarh	2,885	51,703
Dantewara	1,016	75,872
Konta	1,336	14,206
Bijapur	989	24,135
Zamindaris:		
Kutru	1,360	14,836
Bhopalpatnam	720	17,596
Sukma	650	40,171
Kotapalli-Pamer	230	1,132
Total	13,062[1]	522,283[2]

[1] The areas are given according to the figures current before recent surveys. These surveys have only covered portions of the State, and will not be completed till 1944. In May 1934 the Survey of India, computing from the old maps of the Trigonometrical Survey (which I have often found surprisingly inaccurate for the wilder parts of the State) and from the revised figures of recent surveys, calculated the true area to be 13,725 square miles for the whole State. Revised calculations for each tahsil and zamindari are not available.

[2] The populations of each tahsil and zamindari given above were calculated in the State from preliminary census returns; but separate figures were not isolated by the Central Provinces Census Office. The true population of the State was finally returned as 524,721.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

invasion by land-hungry Hindus of the highlands and backwoods, with its accompaniment of money-lenders, cloth pedlars, lawyers' touts, landlords and forest contractors.

The terms of reference for my aboriginal enquiry directed my special attention to the conditions in the tribal tracts which had been declared Partially Excluded Areas under the Government of India Act of 1935. Those are the tracts, speaking generally, where the tribes still constitute a majority of the population and by thus being able to preserve much of their own traditional way of life can still present something of a united front to the invasion of new settlers and new ideas.[1] The Partially Excluded Areas of Chanda district include the huge Ahiri zamindari of Sironcha tahsil and the Garchiroli tahsil zamindaris of Dhanora, Dudhmala, Jharapapara, Khutgaon, Kotgal, Muramgaon, Palasgarh, Rangi, Sirsundi, Sonsari, Chandala, Gilgaon, Pai-Muranda, Potegaon and Gewardha. My enquiries therefore gave me a long desired chance of seeing the Marias of Chanda. These zamindaris have a total area of 4,013 square miles, mostly of hill and forest, and had in 1941 a population of 115,031; this figure included 70,821 'aboriginals', so that out of every 1,000 persons, 607 were tribal. In the 1931 census 34,776 of the Gonds of these zamindaris were returned as Marias, against a total of 34,986[2] Marias for all the British districts of the Central Provinces, leaving only some 210 Marias for the *khalsa* areas of Chanda district and the zamindaris of the Partially Excluded Areas of Drug district. The total strength of the Maria tribe in the British districts of the province is given in the 1941 census summary as 39,553,[3] district figures not being shown. Almost all of these will have been returned from the Chanda Partially Excluded Areas.

It has been indicated in this book how vague are the terms 'Maria' and 'Muria',[4] and how all the tribes thus vaguely designated speak of themselves as Koitor or Koi, distinguishing between one group and another by such terms as Highland Koitor, or Lowland or Plains Koitor. Let it be remembered that the word Maria is not a Gondi word and that *all* Gondi-speaking Gonds throughout the Central Provinces and Berar and Hyderabad State speak of themselves as Koitor; then it will be realized how unprecise, unscientific a term 'Maria' really is. Here in these Chanda zamindaris it is

[1] Any investigator of tribal conditions soon realizes that the tribesmen inside the Partially Excluded Areas are not yet in as bad a plight as their kinsmen outside those areas, in the more 'advanced' districts, where they are steadily losing such land as is left to them and sinking to the status of landless labourers in the service of those who have expropriated them.

[2] and [3] *Census of India*, 1941, Vol. I, Part I, Table XIV, p. 118.

[4] See pp. 35-6, 42, 44, 46-50.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

often difficult to say where the Koitor begin or cease to be Maria. Much depends on the idiosyncrasies of the census enumerators. Moreover just as in Bastar there is really no hard and fast ethnological boundary line between Hill Maria and the tribes generally referred to as 'Muria', so in Chanda to the north and west of the zamindaris many now classed as Gond would undoubtedly at one time have been regarded as Maria, while where Chanda district borders on the west of the Narainpur (Antagarh) tahsil of Bastar the villagers are ethnically identical on both sides of the border, but on the Chanda side are called Maria and on the Bastar side Muria: of this I had a remarkable instance on my journey north from Surjagarh[1] in Ahiri zamindari to Jarawandi,[2] where the forest track crosses the two small west-protruding tongues of Bastar shown near the north-west corner of Bastar in the ethnographic map on page 40, near the Antagarh villages of Udcha[3] and Irpanar[4] in the southern tongue and Markanar[5] in the northern tongue; men of one clan living in the tongues called themselves Muria while their fellow-clansmen in the adjacent Ahiri villages called themselves Maria.

Drug district, Chanda district and Bastar State all meet at the north-west corner of Bastar, as the map on page 40 makes clear. At this corner of Drug are the Drug Partially Excluded Areas, the zamindaris of Aundhi, Koracha, Panabaras and Ambagarh-Chauki transferred to Drug from Chanda in 1907. These zamindaris had in 1941 a population of 82,202, of whom aboriginals numbered 51,452, or 626 in every thousand. Of the latter some 16,750 were returned as practising the tribal religion, and the bulk of these must have been Gond. No 'Marias' were returned. Yet again, especially in Aundhi and Koracha, there is no racial difference between those returned there as 'Gond', their Chanda neighbours returned as 'Maria' and their Bastar neighbours returned as 'Muria'. Reference to land revenue and settlement records even in Panabaras zamindari[6] shows that down to the great famines at the end of the nineteenth century and even later the local headmen and ryots were frequently recorded as Maria by tribe.

All that in fact can safely be predicated of the country covered by my tour in the Chanda and Drug zamindaris is that according to

[1] *Ordnance Survey of India*, Qr. Inch Sheet 5A. ref. MV4774.
[2] Ibidem, ref. MQ5121.
[3] Ibidem, ref. MV4898.
[4] Ibidem, ref. MV5296.
[5] Ibidem, ref. MQ5314.
[6] See for examples Grigson, *The Aboriginal Problem in the Central Provinces and Berar* (Nagpur, 1944), pp. 79-81.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

000 The Zamindar, Mr. Dharamrao Bhujangrao, is himself a Raj-Gond, Atrāmi (6-god) by clan (*pari*); he was then a member of the provincial Legislative Assembly and had been for a short time a Minister in the Provincial Government. His huge estate comprises 2,545 square miles in Sironcha tahsil and 55 square miles in Garchiroli tahsil. The *District Gazetteer*[1] describes almost the whole estate as consisting of 'one unbroken range of forests', drained by the great Wainganga, Pranhita and Indrawati rivers and their tributaries. 'On the extreme east stretches a simple maze of hills of considerable height, which fill almost the whole of the large tract east of the junction of the Palmāgotam,[2] Paralkot and Indrawati rivers at Bhamragarh.[3] These hills[4] attain a height of from 2,000 to 3,000 feet and are absolutely inaccessible to any kind of vehicle. Some distance south of Ahiri itself are situated the Bhimaram and the Dewalmāri hills, and to the east of these lies another range of hills known locally as the Mallanāgutta range. The greatest length and breadth of the estate are each about eighty miles, and, with the exception of Government forests of an area of about 82,000 acres which have been acquired in its interior, it is altogether uninterrupted by other properties.'

161 In the 1931 census Ahiri had in all its 2,600 square miles only 358 villages, 7,748 occupied houses and 40,450 inhabitants,
162 a population, that is, of only sixteen to the square mile. It is thus by far the most thinly populated area of the Province. Even the other Chanda zamindaris had 38 persons to the square mile, and the zamindaris of the Sanjari (Balod) tahsil of Drug district 94. Ahiri's population included 28,968 followers of tribal religion, of whom only 43 were literate, 97 Brahmans, 8,842 Hindus, 2,042 Depressed Classes, 427 Muslims and 72 others. The followers of tribal religion nearly all were 'Maria'. The Hindus would include some hinduized Gonds near Ahiri and along the Pranhita Valley and the Chanda-Sironcha road; but of all the 34,776 Maria enumerated in Chanda district only 274 returned their religion as Hindu and even of the 95,358 other Gonds in the district only 25,302 were Hindu.

It is remarkable to contrast the effect on the tribal population

[1] *Chanda District Gazetteer* (Allahabad, 1909), p. 449.

[2] The quarter-inch *Ordnance Survey of India* sheet does not record this name. The three rivers which meet at Bhamragarh are the Indrawati, the Kotri (which is the Paralkot here mentioned) and the Nibra, which in this book (p. 25-7), I have called by its Maria name Nei Bherat ('Dog River').

[3] *Ordnance Survey of India*, rel. 65A, MV6750. See p. 22 for an account. The confluence of the Indrawati and Kotri or Paralkot rivers is illustrated facing p. 182 of *The Aboriginal Problem*.

[4] These are the projections into Ahiri of the Abujhmar Mountains already mentioned.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

595 161 The Census of 1931 showed that 'women generally preponderate in the more primitive tracts and men in the more advanced areas'. The aboriginal tribes have 'a high proportion of women'.[1] This was certainly true among Gond, Bharia, Binjhwar and Kawar in the Central Provinces, but the returns for the Maria and the Uraon show a lower figure for women. Here I suspect the accuracy of the returns, for there has often been a tendency among aboriginals to return lower figures of women on account of the curious suspicion that the Census inquiries are leading to a wholesale deportation of girls to England for the pleasure of the sahibs or, as I was once told, 'for the honour of Queen Victoria'.

In 1941, the figures for the chief aboriginal communities in Bastar were as follows.

	Males	Females	Total
Maria	60,015	60,095	120,110
Muria	109,512	110,142	219,654
Bhattra	5,471	5,398	10,869
Dorla	7,097	7,508	14,605
Dhurwa (incl. Parja) ..	13,208	12,611	25,819
Gond	8,344	8,276	16,620

My suspicion about the accuracy of the low returns for Maria women in 1931 is confirmed by the fact that 10 years later women outnumbered the men. Women also outnumber men among the Muria, but it must be remembered that at least 50,000 of those returning themselves as Muria were in reality Bison-horn Maria. When we turn to the Ghotul and Jhoria Muria we find another picture.

	Muria males	Muria females
Narayanpur Tahsil—North	8,390	7,975
West	691	631
South	8,647	7,833
Kondagaon Tahsil— North	16,596	16,550
South	17,049	16,506
Total ..	51,373	49,495

There is thus a deficit among the Ghotul Muria of 1,878 women, out of a rough total of 100,000, or 18 per 1,000. There is little scope, therefore, for polygynous enterprise, even though I again suspect that there are actually more women in the tribe than the Census returns admit. Wherever, as Census Officer, I was able to check returns, I found a tendency to conceal the real number of motiari.

595 In the 2,000 marriages examined, only 44 were or had been polygamous. Of these 29 men claimed that they had lived happily with two wives at a time, but 9 admitted that their experiment had not lasted very long. In 5 cases the first wife left the husband, in 4 the first wife succeeded in driving out the

[1] *Census of India, 1931*, Vol. XII, Part 1, p. 131.

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria

CHAPTER TWO

THE BISON-HORN MARIA

I

The so-called Maria of Bastar fall naturally into two 114
divisions distinguished by many details of culture and tradition, the Hill Maria of the Abujhmar Mountains and the Bison-horn Maria living to the south of the Indrawati River. A full account of both these tribes has been given by W. V. Grigson, and his book should be read by those who wish to have a fuller background of Maria life than the present volume can supply. In this chapter I will only give a brief summary of the life and customs of the Bison-horn Maria.

The Bison-horn Maria, who are distinguished from the other [161]
aboriginals of Bastar by the splendid head-dress they use for 131
their marriage dances, numbered about 156,000 in 1931, and 184
I estimate their present strength at about 175,000. They are distributed all over southern Bastar, among the entrancing hills of Dantewara, in the dry forests of Bijapur, among the hot but lovely lowlands of Konta, in the remote Sukma and Kutru Zamindaris. On the borders of the main Maria stock are a number of communities which really belong to it, the Koya of the extreme south, the Dorla who claim to be a superior caste and the mixed population along the banks of the Indrawati and reaching up towards the Muria country beyond Barsur. The Dorla and Koya dance in Bison-horn Maria fashion; the mixed people to the north combine the customs of the Hill Maria with their own. In the neighbourhood of Jagdalpur, the Maria gradually lose their distinctiveness as they approach the town and merge into the southern Muria.

There are few people in India more attractive than the 142
Bison-horn Maria, physically charming, of good stature, per- 147
fect figure, finely featured with carefully tended hair, often a lovely golden-brown in colour. Both men and women are very strong; the men can carry heavy loads great distances, endure long and arduous hunting expeditions and dance all night bearing their great drums. Their health is fairly good, 164
but they are afflicted with yaws, though the work of the